



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Durham VA Health Care System Recognizes September as Suicide Prevention Month

DVAHCS Community Mental Health Summit 2019 Urges Our Community to Support Veterans

DURHAM, NC – In observance of Suicide Prevention Month, Durham VA Health Care System is encouraging community leaders, colleagues, and Veterans' families and friends to help prevent suicide by showing support for those who may be going through a difficult time.

Suicide is a complex national public health issue that affects communities nationwide, with more than 45,000 Americans, including more than 6,000 Veterans, dying by suicide every year. But suicide is preventable. VA is using a community-driven approach to prevent suicide and finding innovative ways to deliver support and care to all 20 million U.S. Veterans whenever and wherever they need it.

"The Durham VA Health Care System is working hard to end Veteran suicide, but we know that only about a third of Veterans come to VA for health care," said DVAHCS Executive Director Paul Crews. "That's why we need everyone in the community to get involved. This September, and all year, I encourage everyone to take a moment to be there for Veterans in need. One act of thoughtfulness can make a big difference and may even save a life."

"Suicide is a major public health concern among Veterans as well as the general public," said Gary H. Cunha, the Suicide Prevention Coordinator at the Durham VA Health Care System. "Suicide is tragic, but often preventable. This summit is a great opportunity to discuss mental health and suicide prevention. Part of our mandate is to make sure all Veterans in our community know all of the services available and what Durham VA has to offer."

DVAHCS Community Mental Health Summit 2019

The Durham Veterans Affairs and Community Mental Health Summit 2019 will take place **Thursday, Sept 12 – Friday, Sept 13, 2019**. The event -- a partnership with the Durham VA and Durham County.

Thursday, Sept 12

Time: 9a.m. – 4:30p.m.

Location: 414 E Main Street (4th floor), Durham Administrative Building

Friday, Sept 13, 2019

Time: 8:30a.m. – 4p.m.

Location: 201 E Main Street, Durham NC (2nd floor), Durham Public Health Building

The VISN 6, VHA Mid-Atlantic Network Director Mrs. DeAnne Seekins will give opening remarks at 9:30am, Thursday, Sept 12th.

Presentations and breakout sessions will focus on whole health and mental health within the Durham VA; suicide prevention programs and services; the use of technology in mental health; and much more. The agenda is attached.

Veterans Crisis Line

Veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and those who know a Veteran in crisis, can call the Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Call **1-800-273-8255** and Press 1, text to 838255 or chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat.

For more information, please contact Yves-Marie Daley, at yves-marie.daley@va.gov or (919) 370-0040.

Reporters covering this issue can download VA's Safe Messaging Best Practices fact sheet or visit www.ReportingOnSuicide.org for important guidance on how to communicate about suicide.